

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12
/088 W

-----011960 251441Z /47

O R 251359Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 145
AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NY

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CAIRO PASS USDEL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: CHRISTMAS SUMMIT: PATCHES OF DISSENT
AMID GENERAL ISRAELI SUPPORT

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH SMALL AREAS OF DISSENTION REMAIN,
BEGIN LEFT FOR ISMAILIA THIS MORNING WITH BROAD
POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HIS PROPOSALS ON THE WEST BANK
AND SINAI. RESERVATIONS WERE EXPRESSED IN A STORMY
MEETING WITH THE LIKUD KNESSET FACTION AND IN A TWO-
PART BRIEFING OF THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.
HOWEVER, IN THE END BOTH BODIES LINED UP OVERWHELMINGLY
BEGIN BEGIN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRESS WARNED THAT
SUCCESS WILL NOW DEPEND ON EGYPT'S BACKING AWAY FROM
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WHAT THE MEDIA CALLS IT MAXIMALIST DEMANDS. ONE PAPER
IS UNRESERVEDLY HOSTILE, FEARING ANOTHER MUNICH.
END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN DEPARTED THIS MORNING FROM
AN EXPECTANT, HOPEFUL ISRAEL, WHICH IS PREPARED FOR
A DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENT AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS

ISMAILIA SUMMIT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT BUT AT THE SAME TIME NERVOUS OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE. THE PRESS REPORTS PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY FOR EXTENDING THE MEETING INTO MONDAY, AND INDEED, IN REMARKS AT THE AIRPORT BEFORE BEGINNING MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF OVERNIGHTING IN ISMAILIA.

2. BY THE TIME HIS PLANE TOOK OFF, BEGIN, HIS PROPOSALS AND HIS MISSION HAD WIDE SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE POLITICAL SPECTRUM--THE EXTREME RIGHT (GUSH EMUNIM) AND THE EXTREME LEFT (COMMUNISTS) EXCEPTED. SINCE HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON, AND DESPITE EARLIER TENTATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF DISSENT, BOTH WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY AND THE ALIGNMENT, HE HAS MANAGED TO BUTTRESS APPROVAL OF HIS PLAN FROM THE MAIN CENTERS OF POLITICAL POWER. HIS ACHIEVEMENT, HOWEVER, REQUIRED SOME HARD SELLING AND EVEN NOW ISLANDS OF OPPOSITION REMAIN. DISAGREEMENT RESTS EXCLUSIVELY ON THE FEELING HE IS GIVING AWAY TOO MUCH. EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR THE COMMUNISTS, HARDLY ANYONE SUGGESTS THAT HE HAS NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH. OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO REMARK ON THE SWEEPING TRANSFORMATION BEGIN HAS APPARENTLY UNDERGONE.

3. THE GUSH EMUNIM IS PLAINLY DISMAYED. IN A MEETING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YESTERDAY, THE GUSH LEADERSHIP DECIDED TO PREPARE A PLAN OF ACTION TO COUNTER BEGIN'S PROPOSALS FOR THE WEST BANK AND CALLED FOR A MEETING ON DECEMBER 27 OF ALL ISRAELI SETTLERS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. MEANWHILE, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SETTLEMENTS IN RAFAH APPROACHES CONVERGED ON JERUSALEM YESTERDAY TO BADGER VARIOUS MINISTERS ABOUT THEIR FEARS THAT THEIR FARMS WILL BE RETURNED TO EGYPT. INDICATIONS ARE THAT FEW EMERGED FROM THE MEETINGS ALLAYED OF THEIR CONCERN.

4. ON DECEMBER 23, BEGIN MET WITH THE LIKUD'S KNESSET FACTION FOR SOME THREE HOURS TO EXPLAIN HIS PROPOSALS. TODAY'S AFTERNOON PAPERS CARRY EXTENSIVE DETAILS OF HIS PRESENTATION. IN ADDITION TO THE CONTENTS OF HIS WEST BANK PLAN, MAARIV REPORTS BEGIN AS TELLING HIS PARTY THAT HE WILL PROPOSE AN ARRANGEMENT FOR THE SINAI TO BE REVIEWED AFTER THREE TO FIVE YEARS. THIS ARRANGEMENT INVOLVES AN IDF PULLBACK TO THE EL ARISH-RAS MUHAMMAD LINE. THREE ISRAELI ELECTRONIC STATIONS AND THREE CENTRAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN SINAI WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE. AN IDF

FORCE WILL ALSO REMAIN IN SHAR-EL SHEIKH. AT THE
END OF THE THREE TO FIVE YEAR PERIOD, ALL IDF
FORCES WILL WITHDRAW TO THE INTERNATIONAL FRON-
TIER BUT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN SINAI WILL REMAIN.

5. THE MEETING WAS CHARACTERIZED AS STORMY, WITH
CRITICISM OF THE PLAN COMING MAINLY FROM MKS GEULA
COHEN, MOSHE SHAMIR AND DOV SHILANSKY. COHEN ATTACKED
THE PROPOSAL TO ALLOW ARABS TO SETTLE ANYWHERE IN
ERETZ YISRAEL. BEGIN WAS CAUSTIC WITH THE THREE DIS-
SENTERS AND EXPRESSED ANGER THAT SOME HAD CRITICIZED
EVEN BEFORE THEY HAD THE COMPLETE STORY. NONETHELESS,
THE SUPPORT WAS OVERWHELMING. AT THE MEETING'S CON-
CLUSION, THE MKS BACKED BEGIN IN AN OPEN VOTE, 29 TO
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TWO WITH ONE ABSTENTION.

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CAIRO PASS USDEL

6. MAARIV AND THE JERUSALEM POST ALSO REPORTED DETAILS OF LAST NIGHT'S SECOND INSTANTMENT OF THE BRIEFING BEGIN GAVE THE KNESSET'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEE. (ISRAEL RADIO JUST REPORTED THAT BEGIN WAS INCENSED UPON READING WHILE IN FLIGHT THE PRESS LEAKS OF THE LIKUD AND KNESSET COMMITTEE MEETINGS.) BEGIN TOLD THE COMMITTEE HE SAW "A GOOD CHANCE OF ACHIEVING A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT, IF EFFORTS TO REACH AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WITH ALL OUR NEIGHBORS FAIL". HE SAID THE US VIEWS ISRAEL'S DEMAND TO MAINTAIN TROOPS ON THE WEST BANK IMPOSSIBLE TO REJECT. VIRTUALLY ALL OF BEGIN'S FIRST MEETING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY HAD BEEN TAKEN UP BY EXPLANATION OF HIS PRO-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSALS; LAST NIGHT'S MEETING WAS DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS. MOSHE SHAMIR CONTINUED HIS CRITICISM, CALLING THE PLAN "A CATASTROPHE". NRP MKS BEN MEIR AND WARHAFTIG EXPRESSED GENERAL APPROVAL OF THE PLAN WITH SOME RESERVATIONS CENTERED ON FEARS OF THE EMERGENCE OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. LIKUD MK AVRAHAM KATZ ASKED IF BEGIN WOULD AGREE TO HOLD GENERAL ELECTIONS FOLLOWING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT BUT BEFORE SIGNING AN AGREEMENT. BEGIN REPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE READY "TO GO TO THE NATION AND CONSULT IT ON ANY AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT OR ANY OTHER ARAB STATE". ALIGNMENT MKS ZADOK AND ALLON WARNED OF THE SECURITY RISKS INVOLVED IN AUTONOMY FOR THE WEST BANK. ALLON AND LIKUD MK ROM ALSO OPPOSED "HASTY" AND EXAGGERATED" WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI. HOWEVER, LAST NIGHT'S MEETING WAS DESCRIBED TO US BY ONE PARTICIPANT (DMC MK TOLEDANO) AS SUPPORTIVE. HE SINGLED OUT THE ALIGNMENT IN PARTICULAR, AS BEING HELPFUL. APPARENTLY, ONLY MOSHE SHAMIR AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, DMC MK ZOREA WERE UNRESERVEDLY CRITICAL.

7. EDITORIAL COMMENT IS SOMEWHAT MIXED BUT GENERALLY SOBER, WITH SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF APPREHENSION. THE JERUSALEM POST, REFLECTING THE OPTIMISM OF EDITOR AVI ROTH'S REPORTING FROM CAIRO (WHO ADMITS OF VIRTUALLY NO ALTERNATIVE TO SUCCESS), IS UP-BEAT. HOWEVER, BOTH HAARETZ AND MAARIV STRESS THAT SUCCESS NOW DEPENDS ON EGYPTIAN CONCESSIONS. HAARETZ SAYS EGYPT "MUST ABANDON ITS MAXIMALIST POSITIONS". ISRAEL IS ENTITLED TO DUE REGARD FROM HER NEIGHBORS FOR HER SECURITY REQUIREMENTS "AND SHE EXPECTS RE-

CIPROCITY IN CONCESSIONS." MAARIV WARNS THAT THE
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ROAD TO PEACE "CAN STILL BE BLOCKED BY ONE DAY OF
OBDURACY (MEANING EGYPT'S), THEREBY THWARTING AN IN-
ITIATIVE WHICH THE FURTHER IT PROGRESSED THE MORE IT
RAISED HOPES AND EXPECTATION". HOWEVER, THE HEIGHT OF
FORBODING (AND OPPOSITION TO BEGIN'S MISSION) WAS
REACHED BY YEDIOT AHARANOT. IT EDITORIALIZES THAT
"WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY LEARNED IS SUFFICIENT TO MAKE
THE SHOCKING TRUTH CLEAR TO US. BEGIN IS GOING TO
OUR VERY OWN MUNICH, WHICH MAY GO DOWN IN OUR
ANNALS IN THE SAME WAY THAT THE FIRST MUNICH DID IN
THOSE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA."
LEWIS

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